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# THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL JOURNAL

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## Educational News and Editorial Comment

### THE ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

There are indications that the elementary-school principal is beginning to be thought of as an important factor in school organization. At a recent meeting of the State Teachers' Association held at Forth Worth, Texas, the Elementary-School Principals' Section adopted the following resolution:

Be it resolved that the principals of elementary schools should have a national organization; that a delegate be sent to represent every city having as many as three elementary schools; that copies of this resolution be forwarded to each city superintendent of each city having as many as three elementary schools; and, be it further resolved that boards of education be requested to defray the expenses of delegates to a national convention of elementary-school principals; and, be it further resolved that the elementary-school principals of Texas meet at the Atlantic City meeting of the Department of Superintendence in February there to organize a National Elementary-School Principals' Association.

The Schoolmasters Club of Cincinnati heard at a recent meeting a report of a committee which attempted to distinguish the duties of the superintendent from those of the principal. The review of the problem presented by Mr. Davis and published in the *Cincinnati School Index* is as follows:

Acting in conjunction with the board and its committees, the superintendent manages and directs the schools. He is the most important officer

in the employment of a municipality. His office should be the center of the school system, up to which and down from which all authority, direction, and inspiration flow. He should be the executive officer of the school board: its ears, eyes, and brains. His duties are threefold: as an executive, as an organizer, and as a supervisor. As the city school system increased in size with the growth of the city, *need* for expansion and differentiation of these three duties arose, with the result that various officers were added, and departments created. Of these the educational department came first. All other departments were created for the express purpose of enabling the educational department to render a larger community service, and to better fulfil the work for which the schools were established. As the lines of relationship show, the superintendent, in addition to being executive head of the educational department, is given general oversight and co-ordinating power over other departments and officers. Under this scheme the superintendent is, as it were, prime minister. This *primacy* is necessary for efficiency, co-operation, and proper official relationship. In practice each head in a large, well-organized sphere will conduct affairs of his department, without interference on the part of the superintendent; but in case of friction and conflict of authority the superintendent should be the co-ordinating head. Also the work of departments so overlaps that this is a vital necessity. In cities where this co-ordination does not exist friction and shifting of responsibility occur from time to time with the result that the efficiency of the school is impaired.

As the scheme suggests, the unit of supervision will be the individual *school*, and the principal becomes the instrument through which supervisory control is exercised. The importance of his position is seen in that he is responsible for *all* work of administration and the supervision of all subjects. All the workings of the school pass through his hands. His tasks are numerous, important, and many times of petty nature. The apportionment of his time to these duties is important. Several years ago President Churchill of the New York City board of education sent out the following question: "What are the six most important and essential functions of a school principal?" Eighty-three principals and teachers answered it from *all* parts of the city, representing various types of schools.

1. Eighty-two of the eighty-three said that the most important function of the school principal was *supervision* in the classroom. The amount of time varied from 50 to 100 per cent.
2. Sixty-two contributors set down as *legitimate* and *un begrudging* use of school time the education of teachers by principals.
3. Sixty-nine of the participants record that the principal's schedule should allow time for planning and organization.
4. According to fifty-seven, the principals should have time to cultivate friendly relations with the pupils.
5. Fifth in order of these eighty-three was the fact that principals should test and record progress.

6. Forty-six said that the principal should spend a part of his time in parental co-operation.

Accepting this report of Churchill's as setting forth the proper allotment of duties, we observe that the principal *should be a supervisor*. Under our present system the greater part of his time is actually spent in duties such as management of buildings and playground, exemption of pupils from school who are sick or exposed to contagious disease, work on attendance, filling requisitions and reports, handling mail, messenger service, telephone calls, enrollment and placement of pupils, receiving visitors, parents, agents, book agents, and inspectors, and a hundred other petty things. All will agree that most of his present duties could be attended to successfully by an efficient office assistant, trained in school administration. Thus an executive-administrative assistant added to each school would give the principal an opportunity to devote his undivided time to the more important duty of supervision.

As you note, the principal in this scheme is given the task of supervision of all subjects, including the so-called specials. Supervision is hereby lodged where contact and conference with teachers is frequent, easy, natural, and necessary. Objection to this is immediately raised in that we do not have principals who are capable of supervising all subjects, which is quite true; but once having elevated and magnified the office of principal from mere clerkship to leader and guide, and made it attractive by a larger salary, we shall induce bigger men to enter the profession and prompt men already in the office to prepare themselves better for their new duties.

In conclusion, the committee offers for general discussion a scheme wherein the superintendent has co-ordinating power over all departments and the principal, freed from administrative duties, is given charge of all supervision.

The fact is that the duties of the principal are becoming more and more important with the enlargement of urban schools, and yet there is no clear definition of these duties. This *Journal* has in recent years devoted much space to this general matter. Is it not of sufficient importance to be discussed widely as the Schoolmasters Club of Cincinnati has commenced to discuss it? Definite, concrete suggestions of the type here quoted ought to be worked out, discussed, and tried.

#### ST. LOUIS SCHOOL SYSTEM

Superintendent Withers of St. Louis has accepted the deanship of the School of Pedagogy of New York University. This office he refused when it was first offered to him a year ago, but conditions

in St. Louis have become such that he has decided to leave that city. His published statement is as follows:

My reasons for declining to be a candidate for reappointment as superintendent of instruction and for announcing the fact at this time are as follows:

It is utterly impossible under the conditions that now exist in the Board of Education to render to the extent of my ability the kind and quality of service which the charter requires of the superintendent and which the people have a right to expect. There are problems of the greatest moment before the schools that call for the unhampered effort of the superintendent and the intelligent support of the entire Board of Education if they are to be happily solved and if the schools are to continue to hold the enviable place which they have won and now occupy among the city school systems of America. The call for unified effort, for unselfish service on the part of all who are engaged in this work is always present. That call is today and will be for the next four years quite as great as it was at any time during the period of the war.

Under the provisions of the charter the position of the superintendent of instruction is one of the greatest difficulty and importance. He is, in fact, the executive head of the public-school system, having under his direction the work of nearly 3,000 teachers and the educational welfare of 110,000 children. He is primarily responsible for the selection, training, placement, rating, promotion, demotion, and elimination of teachers; for the correct educational use of school property, buildings, and equipment valued at nearly \$30,000,000. He is responsible for the quality of service for which the people spend nearly \$7,000,000 annually.

He is expected to keep himself informed as to the best theory and practice in vogue in other cities and developed in schools and colleges of education. He must define and execute under the general direction of the Board of Education the policy that will meet the extremely complex educational needs of a modern city of almost 1,000,000 population. No man, however well qualified he may be, can meet successfully such responsibilities as these if he does not have the full sympathy and support of his board of education and must work in the depressing atmosphere of constant personal opposition of a considerable part of the board's membership.

Realizing as I do the great importance of the position and the extreme difficulty of filling it satisfactorily, I feel it my duty to announce my intention thus far in advance in order that the board may have ample time and opportunity to discover and secure the best available person to fill the vacancy. I desire to give my time and attention for the remainder of my term to the major problems now confronting the schools. This, I feel, can in some respects be more successfully done if I am not a candidate for reappointment than if I were.

The situation thus described is one that has been maturing for some years past. There is a small clique of members of the Board of Education of St. Louis who have made every possible effort to nullify the excellent school charter which gives the superintendent large powers and responsibilities. They have carried on the kind of persistent and harassing warfare which only cheap politicians have the time and cowardice to wage. Fortunately, there are social forces at work which are likely to clean up the board at the election in the spring, but the election comes too late to affect the appointment of the new superintendent.

One is almost disposed to say that St. Louis ought to suffer without sympathy for its lethargy during the last four years while Dr. Withers has been steadily organizing the schools along progressive lines in spite of the debasing influences of these school-board members. But the loss of Dr. Withers from the Mississippi Valley is not a mere matter between St. Louis and one of its local officials. He and the policies for which he has stood are of importance to many another system. He has been and is a leader in the profession. His services in Harris Teachers College and in one of the high schools where he was principal were so conspicuous that he was the inevitable candidate for the superintendency at the time of Mr. Blewett's death. Since his appointment he has continued to direct the efforts of the principals and teachers of St. Louis along lines of constructive and scientific development. The system has steadily improved. At the time of the survey many excellent features of the system were discovered and described. The close harmony and co-operation among the educational staff and the efficient organization of the Harris Teachers College were intimately linked together and were major factors in the success of the system. Added to these was a school charter of the best possible type. All these good things fell under the disapproval of a minority of the school board, and they have done what they could to wreck them. They have deliberately tried to make the superintendency untenable for one of the ablest educators in the country.

Dr. Withers will have an influential opportunity in New York, and he will be answerable only to a board of trustees and a

president interested in the best developments in education. His services will be appreciated, and he will be able to use his energies productively. St. Louis, on the other hand, presents the pitiful example to the lesser communities of this region of a city deprived of an efficient officer by unworthy men elevated to office because good citizens were asleep. The example is instructive, but not encouraging.

#### THE NATIONAL CHILD LABOR COMMITTEE

The announcement of Child Labor Day came from the national committee so late this year that it will scarcely reach our readers before the day set for national consideration of the problems of juvenile employment. We are glad to give space, however, to the statement which accompanies the notice. The facts are highly significant, and permanently significant. It is to be hoped that the conscience of America can be aroused to deal promptly and intelligently with the matters here reported.

It is not a wise solution of the child-labor problem to refuse to consent to all forms of work by children. The industries of this country are a part of its social machinery and, as such, should be made to contribute to the upbringing of the new generation. What is needed is wise supervision of the whole matter. Wise supervision can never be instituted until agencies of protection have been organized and provided with knowledge and equipment which will make it possible to deal in a comprehensive way with a problem that is today almost untouched.

The committee's announcement is as follows:

Most of us take it for granted that American children go to school, receive a fair education, and, taking it by and large, are so much more fortunate than the children of any other nation that we need not worry about them. But how true is our assumption? At least one-fifth of all American children between ten and fifteen are out of school earning their own living. In one industrial center in Massachusetts, a state that stands high on our educational roll, only one child in ten finishes high school, while sixty-six out of every hundred leave school for work the moment the compulsory school law releases them. This is true in a greater degree in other states, some of which still have no adequate schooling law, require only a knowledge of English of children leaving school for work, and have a school term of only eighty days. The result is that almost one-quarter of our population is illiterate.

In fourteen states this year it is reported that child labor has increased, more children having left school for work than in 1919. Many of them are employed in industries not regulated by the federal tax on child labor; they may be employed nine, ten, or eleven hours a day; they may be worked on night shifts; they may even work at trades known to be dangerous—and the child in industry is just three times as likely to suffer accident as the adult. Massachusetts, again, is more careful of her children than many states, yet in Massachusetts last year there were 1,691 industrial accidents to children under sixteen, ten of which were fatal and sixty-two of which resulted in permanent partial disability to the child.

Is all this a square deal for American children?

It is to consider such facts, to bring the child welfare situation home to all of us, that the National Child Labor Committee appoints the fourth Sunday in January each year as Child Labor Day. In 1921 it falls on January 23. It is observed not only in Sunday schools and churches, but on January 22 in synagogues, and on January 24 in schools, colleges, clubs, and other organizations. Pamphlets and posters are distributed by the National Child Labor Committee for use by those interested in observing the day, and anyone who wishes such material should write directly to the National Child Labor Committee, 105 East 22d Street, New York City.

It happens that Child Labor Day comes this year at the end of National Thrift Week, and so the committee points out that the conservation of children may well be considered as an item in the larger national thrift. "Every child without an education today," says Owen R. Lovejoy, secretary of the National Child Labor Committee, "means an illiterate citizen tomorrow; every child who is overworked today, means a dulled, unhealthy citizen tomorrow; and every child who enters a low-wage, blind-alley occupation today, without means of advancing himself, means a poverty-stricken, inefficient citizen tomorrow, very possibly a charge upon the nation. What kind of citizens do we want, and what kind are we making?"

#### WOMEN IN THE PRESIDENT'S CABINET

The idea has gained currency that a woman should be appointed to the President's Cabinet. It has been freely suggested that the proposed department of education would be one of the most natural opportunities for the realization of this idea. The *New York Globe* reported a series of interviews which cannot be quoted in full, but which are fairly summarized in the first two paragraphs of an article published on December 16. These paragraphs are as follows:

To ascertain the trend of feeling among representative women toward the proposal for a feminine member in the cabinet, *The Globe* put this question

to nine women prominent in varied activities: "Do you believe there should be a woman member of the cabinet, either as head of a newly created Department of Education or department of women's activities, or for some other place in this body?" Eight of the nine women said "yes," always with the reservation that a capable woman should be chosen. The only one unfavorable reply came from Miss Lena Phillips, secretary of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women. These are the complete statements:

Mrs. Clarice Baright, lawyer: "I certainly believe an able woman should be chosen, regardless of politics, for a place in the cabinet, not as a compliment to the sex, but because it will give women the chance to co-operate in the government of the nation. Ida Tarbell has made a statement that the President should not select a woman to a cabinet position on complimentary grounds; that we didn't have the vote long enough to be fitted for responsible positions; that the vote and citizenship are sexless, and that therefore the most able and experienced men should be given preference in the government.

"The vote is decidedly not sexless. If the vote is sexless, then suffrage is just a futile increase of the number of ballots. The very essence of the value of woman suffrage is that women use the vote to co-operate and lend the benefit of their viewpoint and experience in the government. There certainly should be a capable woman member of the cabinet, representing motherhood, the children, education, and the women's share newly acquired in running the affairs of this country.

It will be a misfortune for all concerned if the managers of the Smith-Towner Bill allow this measure to slip out of their hands. Apparently a writer in the *Baltimore Evening Sun* of December 15 thinks this has already happened, for she opens her discussion of the bill with the following paragraph:

Washington, Dec. 15.—So far-reaching are the purposes of the Smith-Towner Educational Bill, which 10,000,000 women are now demanding as the only logical remedy for the nation's confusion of teaching methods and unevenness of educational distribution, that it is only by an examination of the specific provisions of the act that an appreciation of its sweeping powers can be obtained.

#### CARE OF PUPILS BELOW NORMAL

At Mason City, Iowa, the plan of organizing work for defectives and for children who are below normal in their school work has been carried far enough to demonstrate its practicability. At the request of the editors of this *Journal*, Superintendent Vasey has contributed the following brief statement:

I do not know that Mason City has any particularly unique feature in the handling of the problem of teaching defective children in the small city.

I think there is a general feeling that cities undertaking special education of defective children rather invite failure if they attempt to make a centrally located organization for these children. The sentiment, in Iowa at least, seems to be that it is necessary to open rooms in individual buildings, rather than organize a centrally located group. In Mason City we have no building handling any more than four hundred and fifty children in average daily attendance. Consequently unless the work is enlarged to include features of adjustment of children to different grades there isn't work for one full-time teacher. It takes a group of from one thousand to fifteen hundred children to have enough children of the defective type for a special room. We have consequently organized a central location where children are brought from all buildings in the city, and where a special type of education is given them, under three teachers. We accommodate forty children during the year; however, there will be as many as eighty enrolled in this department. The supervisor of this work spends half her time testing the mental status of children all over the city who are subjects for repeating grades.

We are now gathering data from all the grades with the intention of organizing a department for children immediately below the normal group. In testing over a hundred children we find a large number who are unhappy in their work, failing for the most part to do successfully scarcely any phase of the class assignments. They are, however, capable of learning to read, and perhaps most of the ordinary demands of living they can meet successfully. We are finding that these children in reality are the retarded children inasmuch as their mental status is too low to comprehend the work of the grade in which they are placed.

We hope to work out some plan whereby we can give these children a special type of education involving more handwork, more motor activities, more music, and only the most practical and applicable phases of the common subjects. In the Opportunity Room, as we call it, we endeavor to make distinction between the children who can learn to read the daily newspaper and those who cannot. For all children who have a mentality indicating a possibility of functioning in these fields we emphasize academic work. With the children whose possibilities are perhaps too low to function in the common subjects we emphasize especially the simple habits of health, some simple constructive work, lots of music and play, and we endeavor to supervise their feeding.

The greatest problem we have to meet is the difficulty of convincing parents that this type of education is absolutely necessary for the happiness of children who are below normal. We have exercised no compulsion of any kind. We cannot rely upon any state law for help. We must rely entirely upon the proof of benefit to the children and usually after a few months of trial. All the children we have now in the department are there with the consent and with the approval of the parents of these children. The regular rooms are thereby relieved of the heaviest retard.

## SCHOOL FINANCES IN IOWA

The Department of Education of the University of Iowa has set an example which should be followed in every state. It has published a report prepared by one of its officers, Dean W. F. Russell, giving tables which throw light on the whole matter of school revenues and expenditures in the different communities of the state. The questions which this report attempts to answer are as follows:

1. What is the legal basis for school finance in Iowa?
2. What are the legal requirements, duties, and rights of Iowa school officers so far as finance is concerned?
3. When specifically are Iowa school officers required to perform these duties?
4. How do school expenditures compare with actual wealth, population, and attendance in the cities of Iowa?
5. What is the relation between school expenditure and actual wealth in Iowa in 1919 and in years past?
6. What is the relation between expenditures for schools and for other municipal purposes?
7. What data have we upon which to base a scientific school budget?
8. How may we improve our system of accounting?

The facts brought out in the various sections of the bulletin will be of help in guiding cities and towns to understand what they are doing in comparison with their neighbors. The plan is to repeat the study in later years so as to furnish a basis for constant checks on the financial organization of schools.

An ingenious device for comparing school taxes on the basis of wealth is described in the following paragraphs:

Another way of showing this same series of facts is the *Index of Opportunity*. Taking the data for the fifty-six school systems and ranking them in order, we find that the median amount for schools per \$1,000 of real wealth is \$5,445. Just as many of the fifty-six school districts are raising locally for school purposes \$5,445 as are raising less than this figure. Then, taking the data for Tables 8, 9, and 10 and ranking them in order, we find for the same cities that the median amount raised per pupil is \$68.25. That is, just as many of these cities are raising more than \$68.25 per pupil as are raising less than this figure. Thus the typical school system of these fifty-six cities is raising \$68.25 per pupil per year, this sum representing \$5,445 per \$1,000 of real wealth. This means that if an Iowa city is to tax itself the median amount for school purposes to send one child to school for one year, it will require a unit of real wealth amounting to \$12,534.00.

If, then, we assume as the numerator of a fraction the amount of money raised per pupil for each of these cities, and as the denominator the amount of money raised for school purposes per \$12,534 of real wealth, we have a ratio which yields a measure of the opportunity of a community to improve educationally. Thus a ratio of 1.00 (1/1) means that a community is raising an amount for schools with about the same burden of taxation as is typical. If the ratio is 2.00 (2/1) the school system is raising its school funds without as great burden as is usual. If, on the other hand, the ratio is .50 (1/2) the burden of taxation is much heavier than usual. If the ratio is greater than unity, the educational opportunity of the community increases. As it is less than unity, the educational opportunity decreases. The former schools are bearing their educational burdens easily. Improvement can be secured with ease. The latter schools have a more difficult task. Possibly they should receive state aid.

By the use of this index Mr. Russell has shown that there is the widest difference between communities in different parts of the state.

Such studies as this will do much to extract schools from the financial morass into which they are sinking. Schools must have money in greater amounts than in the past if they are to be efficient. They cannot get the additional funds merely by asking for them. There must be clear scientific studies of current practices, stated in a form which laymen can understand. Each state has its own problems so that no single study will do the work for all. Agencies ought to be found in every state to carry through studies of the type made in Iowa.

#### INTELLIGENCE TESTS AND GRADING

There are many examples of the misuse of intelligence tests. One hears now and then some extremist advocating the abandonment of all of the ordinary devices for grading pupils in favor of some intelligence tests. One hears teachers' judgments roundly criticized as so unworthy of confidence that anything would be better as a basis of promotion. The fact is that there is no intelligence test or system of tests that can justify itself by empirical evidence as the best basis, or even as a safe single basis, for promotion in school. There is, however, a place and time for all things and it is, therefore, important that a good example of a legitimate use of tests when it does appear be given wide publicity.

The schools of Alton, Illinois, have made a very proper use of the Binet-Simon Tests and the report rendered by Superintendent Reavis to his board of education sets forth the facts as follows:

I desire to submit to you a report recently made to me by Miss Olive Gillham, primary supervisor, on the results of an attempt to classify the children of our first primary grade on the basis of their mental development instead of the usual basis, chronological age.

The Stanford Revision of the Binet-Simon Scale for measuring intelligence was used. This is administered to the children individually and requires from twenty to thirty minutes per pupil. It measures mental development and shows how greatly the mental age or development differs from the chronological age. The tests are helpful in our school work in the following ways: (1) The results furnish a basis for making an effective classification of the entering children; (2) by showing the inequalities of mental development they aid the teacher in adapting her instruction to the children's needs; and (3) they help the teacher to realize that successful teaching means a child's progress from where he is, and not a uniform standard of achievement for each pupil.

Only the children that presented special problems in regard to classification—the apparently very bright and the very slow—were tested. The tests were given in the following schools and to the following number of children: Garfield, 6; Lowell, 11; Lincoln, 14; Humboldt, 16; Washington, 6; McKinley, 10; Irving, 6; Gillham, 1; Horace Mann, 12; Douglass, 3; Lovejoy, 3; total, 88.

The children tested, with the exception of two, were in the beginning class (1B); several of them, however, had been in school a half year and were repeating the grade. Of the number tested, 24 were found to be from four months to one year above the six-year level of mental development (these were recommended for rapid moving classes, to be given extra promotion as soon as they are ready for it); 29 measured to about the six-year level; several of these however were seven years old chronologically, having been in school last year; 29 were from four months to one year below the six-year level; two were only about four and one-half years old mentally; and four were decidedly subnormal. These subnormal children had reached the following mental ages: one child, nine years old chronologically, measured to about the three-year level of intelligence; another, six years old, was only about three years old mentally; a third was twelve years old but had reached the mental age of about six years; and a fourth was ten years old with the mental development of four years. Very little can be done for this type of children in group teaching.

The kindergarten affords the appropriate training for children under six years of age. It broadens their experience, helps them to understand and interpret the life around them, and develops an independence and self-activity which is a necessary foundation for the primary work. All the children that were found to be from a half year to a year below the mental age of six years

need this training before attempting first-grade work. At present this classification is possible in two of our schools, and at one of these, as a result of the tests, four pupils were transferred from the first primary grade to the kindergarten. In this school the greatest value of the tests could be realized by making an effective classification of the children below the six-year level of mental development. In other schools where this classification cannot be made the teachers will try to adapt their instruction to the immaturity of these children as well as they can in classes where the majority are ready for regular first-grade work.

Some pupils tested were repeating the first primary grade and while they are seven years old chronologically, they have now just reached the mental age of six years. When they entered school last year these children needed kindergarten training instead of primary work for they were at that time mentally only about five years old. If they had had work appropriate to their mental ability, they would now be entering the first grade ready for its work instead of having to go over material that is stale and has become distasteful to them because it is beyond their comprehension, and they would be spared the added handicap of the discouragement of failure, which crushes self-confidence and destroys the spirit of work.

No other grade suffers so large a percentage of failures as the first primary. This is doubtless largely due to the difference in the mental age of children when they enter school and to the inappropriate classification of these children according to chronological age rather than according to the level of mental development.

The use of intelligence tests to help us classify all these children more effectively and thus provide the right training for them, through kindergartens, would help eliminate these failures and aid in giving all children more nearly the right start in their school life.